

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS

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ALCOHOL ABUSE STILL A PROBLEM FOR CALIFORNIANS

***Parents reminded during prom and graduation seasons to speak
with their children about alcohol use***

SACRAMENTO – It is imperative that parents speak with their children about alcohol use during the approaching graduation and prom seasons, California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) Chief Deputy Director Thomas Powers announced today.

“The consequences of alcohol abuse are dangerous and persistent, affecting the health and safety of all Californians,” said Powers. “During prom and graduation seasons, parents must be especially vigilant in discussing with their children the potential physical, emotional and fatal effects of alcohol abuse.”

The California Highway Patrol reports that each year in the state, alcohol-related collisions injure nearly 10,000 youth under age 21 and claim the lives of nearly 300, which is enough to fill more than 340 classrooms.

In California, more than 52,000 people are admitted to publicly funded alcohol treatment each year. Alcohol ranks third, behind methamphetamine and heroin, as the primary drug of abuse for Californians seeking treatment. Youth under age 18 account for 4,000 of those admitted for alcohol abuse treatment.

In addition, about 5.5 million adults are binge drinkers. Among youth, 23 percent of 11th graders binge drink, and according to the 2004 California Student Survey, in a six-month period, 62.5 percent of 11th graders used alcohol.

There is also substantial evidence that early alcohol use can lead to treatment later in life. In 2002, 88 percent of adults admitted for alcohol abuse treatment started using alcohol before age 21.

“The longer we can delay the age of first use of alcohol or drugs, the less likely a young person will become addicted,” said Powers. “Prevention programs can assist with behavioral change, but parental involvement is the key.”

Tips for parents to utilize when talking to their teens about difficult issues, such as alcohol, include:

- Establish open communication. Make it easy for your teen to speak honestly with you.
- Show you care. Children need to know how important they are to their parents.
- Draw the line. Set clear, realistic expectations for your child’s behavior. Establish consequences and enforce them.
- Offer acceptance. Ensure teens know that if they make a mistake they can talk to you about it.
- Understand that your child is growing up, so make an effort to respect their privacy while still remaining the parent.

For more information, please log on to the ADP Website at <http://www.adp.ca.gov>.

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